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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER MAMMADYAROV ON ENERGY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (C) Summary: During a June 14 meeting with the Ambassador, Foreign Minister Mammadyarov said he recently sent a letter to Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul to push for a transit agreement, suggesting an agreement was possible within one month. Mammadyarov said SOCAR will negotiate the agreement. The Ambassador reviewed a series of democracy commitments Mammadyarov made during his March meeting with A/S for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Barry Lowenkron, underscoring the importance of progress on these issues amidst growing negative signs in the media and business environments. Septel will report Mammadyarov's comments on missile defense. End Summary.

Energy Developments

12. (C) On progress toward a transit agreement with Turkey, Mammadyarov suggested the ball was in Turkey's court. Mammadyarov summarized the state of play as, "We have gas, we have Greece, but we do not have Turkey." Mammadyarov said he recently sent a letter to Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul to push for a transit agreement and that the GOAJ is ready to move forward on this issue. SOCAR and a representative from Turkey's Ministry of Energy will likely take the lead on reaching an agreement, according to Mammadyarov, maybe in one month. Mammadyarov argued that Turkey is saying that the South Caucasus Gas Pipeline (SCP) pipeline is still not ready and that Turkey says it needs "one more month," while observing that he recently had an "interesting discussion" with representatives from the Public Gas Corporation of Greece (DEPA).

Human Rights Dialogue

13. (C) The Ambassador provided Mammadyarov with a list of follow-up actions from his March meeting with A/S for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Barry Lowenkron as part of the bilateral democracy and human rights dialogue, noting the need to discuss progress in a subsequent meeting. Quickly reviewing the document, Mammadyarov asked that journalists' training be added to the media freedom section. The Ambassador underscored that the declining state of media freedom is raising concern in Washington, adding that the inappropriate use of force to disburse a peaceful protest by journalists was particularly disturbing. Mammadyarov said that these type of incidents were "ridiculous" and "stupid," while raising the need for more journalists' training. Mammadyarov also stated that some officials in the Presidential Administration were angry about the bad press

they were receiving from local journalists. The Ambassador also raised the Embassy's continuing inability to observe Farhad Aliyev's trial and asked the Foreign Minister's assistance in obtaining access.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador remarked that in another disturbing trend, corruption in Azerbaijani is continuing to worsen. Companies are encountering difficulties with customs, taxes, and licensing processes. Mammadyarov remarked that the GOAJ should address the corruption problem, but sought to deflect this issue by raising GOAJ difficulties in getting local-hire employees at the U.S. Embassy to pay Azerbaijani income taxes.

¶5. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question, Mammadyarov said he was unsure who would be included on the Democracy Council, suggesting that Presidential Chief of Staff Ramiz Mehdiyev would be the best person to address this issue. Mammadyarov also broached the idea of the Embassy arranging a voluntary visitor program for Mehdiyev, noting that Mehdiyev has never visited the U.S. and implying that a visit would broaden his views.

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